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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3646
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6794
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 4131
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 8021
RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 5267
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2505
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 2640
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 3481
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4624
RUEHQ/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5135
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 9732
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL
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TAGS: PGOV PREL ECON MARR MASS MOPS BL VE

SUBJECT: GOB INSISTS VENEZUELAN ASSISTANCE IS NOT
INTERFERENCE

Classified By: Ecopol Counselor Andrew Erickson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) In a meeting between the Bolivian and Venezuelan militaries May 21, Venezuelan Ambassador Julio Montes announced that his country donated \$30 million last year to Bolivia, part of which the GOB will use to improve military barracks. Montes suggested revamping the Bolivian military to defend Bolivia's natural resources. He said "we need to state a new vision of security and defense for the continent in the face of an even bigger and more developed enemy." Montes further asserted that Bolivia and Venezuela "have the responsibility to take on the daily fight to be liberated from imperialism," comparing the present day "imperialist" system to Spanish colonialism.

¶2. (U) The GOB defended its close relationship with Venezuela in a string of May 21 statements. Unidentified GOB officials said "the idea is to build a new nation-- Bolivia's relations with Cuba/Venezuela are based on shared ideologies and on the objective of building a new fatherland." Minister of Government Octavio Rada said "we've never hidden the shared ideas we have with Chavez... (and) Castro." Rada further contended that Bolivia is not subordinate to or dependent on Venezuela. "You're not going to find examples of subordination or dependence like there was in the neoliberal governments that each year were examined by the IMF, the World Bank and the U.S. Embassy in order to know what one had to do in Bolivia," he said. Rada's father-in-law, MAS Deputy Gustavo Torrico added that "we maintain good relations with Venezuela, with Cuba, with other countries in Latin America also, because we share a dream of building a new fatherland, the great South American fatherland." Defense Minister Walker San Miguel said rumors of "Venezuelan expansionism in all of Latin America and other crazy ideas are meant to attack the real process we are living, because integration is not equal to subordination, solidarity is not interference, respect for sovereignty doesn't have anything to do with expansionism." GOB spokesman Alex Contreras echoed these views, stating that Bolivia is not dependent on Venezuela but enjoys Venezuela's unconditional support.

¶3. (U) Opposition politicians lost little time in criticizing the increasingly close ties between Bolivia,

Venezuela and Cuba. Podemos leader Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga accused President Morales' government of being "submissive" in the face of President Chavez' "hegemonic hemispheric project, the most dangerous in Latin America." Quiroga concluded by calling for Morales to "divorce Hugo Chavez and wed Bolivia."

¶4. (C) Comment: The GOB's energetic responses to criticisms of its relationship with Venezuela come across as defensive. Also, many of its comments about shared ideologies with Cuba and Venezuela and creation of a South American fatherland raise more questions than they answer. While several opposition leaders denounced Venezuelan interference in internal Bolivian affairs, the public outcry on this issues remains somewhat faint. End comment.

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